

City of Albemarle

Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Albemarle's Current Pedestrian Environment

- Recent development trends toward NC 24/27
- City is becoming more suburban in character
- A growing interest in downtown
- Excellent pedestrian environment downtown
- Existing sidewalks in older neighborhoods close to downtown
- Some existing off road paths, and good corridor possibilities exist for additional paths
- Viable potential pedestrian connections



Pedestrian Plan Goals

1. Connect important destinations with sidewalks, greenways, and other pedestrian routes along roadways, utility lines, creeks, railroad lines or other potential corridors so that walking becomes a more viable transportation option.
2. Support and guide pedestrian-friendly land use decisions such as mixed-use zoning, connectivity, and infill that encourages a development style conducive to non-motorized transportation.
3. Improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians with a special concern for the disabled, elderly, children, and low income residents.
4. Improve environmental conditions and community health by reducing air, water and noise pollution resulting from unnecessary vehicular traffic and by increasing physical activity and exercise.
5. Encourage economic and social vitality by creating market, social interaction, and healthcare cost-saving opportunities.
6. Promote awareness through education of the wide-ranging benefits of a pedestrian lifestyle throughout the community.
7. Update and maintain existing pedestrian facilities with the necessary funding and workforce.

October 2007

Pedestrian Needs in Albemarle

Deficiencies in Pedestrian Network

Although Albemarle has a fairly well-developed sidewalk and crosswalk network in the downtown area and some surrounding neighborhoods, pedestrian system elements elsewhere are limited. Many of the City's roadways are wide enough to support walkways, and countdown crossing signals are beginning to be placed at intersections across town. Unfortunately, many residential areas have no pedestrian facilities at all. The Highway 24/27 Bypass bisects the City of Albemarle and was designed to accommodate mainly automobile travel, creating difficult connectivity challenges.



Building setback and design have big impacts on walkability.



Wide roads and high speed-limits encourage speeding.



Roads planned only for automobiles limit safe walking.



Lack of crosswalks increase risks.



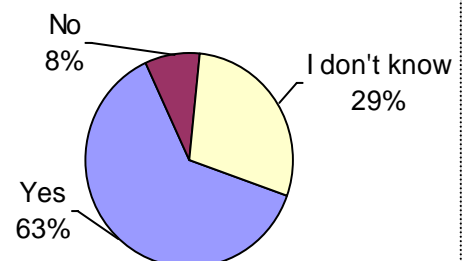
Poor pedestrian access to shopping areas encourages driving.

Summary of Public Input

A total of two public forums were held over the course of this project and a survey was distributed with the City utility bill. The first forum was intended to introduce the project, present background information, and seek input from the community regarding pedestrian needs and issues. The second forum presented draft recommendations, based on an assessment of needs through mechanisms including public and stakeholder input, a review of relevant policies, and field visits. Key points raised by the public at these meetings and in the survey results include:

- Sidewalks, greenways, traffic calming are needed
- Heavy traffic, poor crossings, and high speeds make walking dangerous
- Existing facilities need to be connected with a particular emphasis on schools, low-income areas, public facilities, and parks.

Would you support public funding initiatives for pedestrian facilities?



Pedestrian Opportunities

System Overview

National transportation surveys indicate that more than half of all auto trips in the United States are less than two miles long. More than 25% of car trips in the United States are one mile or less, and 14% of car trips are a half-mile or less. But, Americans choose to not take a car for trips less than a mile only 25% of the time.

In comparison, according to the London National Travel Survey, 39% of trips in London under five miles in length are walked, and 80% of trips under one mile in length are walked. In the Netherlands, up to 40% of all trips nationwide are made by bicycle, and a third of the people ride their bike to work everyday. Only 1% of all trips in American cities are by bicycle. Part of this difference is due to denser development in clusters, better pedestrian infrastructure, and intelligent land use policies in European cities.

Pedestrians generally have three needs when it comes to walking. Their routes need to be (1) short and direct, (2) safe, and (3) pleasurable.

Developing a pedestrian plan that provides more opportunities to make short trips by walking would provide the largest benefit the City can achieve over the long term. Increasing commercial and residential density in community centers would decrease the distance that pedestrians need to walk. Providing safe walking and road crossing infrastructure within community centers will help Albemarle's citizens become more comfortable with walking. Making the walking experience pleasurable by creating aesthetically pleasing routes that are free from the noise, stress and eyesores caused from pollution, traffic, unattractive architecture, crime, and other factors will allow the residents to enjoy and truly be a part of their community.

Pedestrian Oriented Development Districts

The Albemarle Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan is focused around a series of Pedestrian Oriented Development Districts. By identifying neighborhoods that presently or potentially have community necessities such as residential areas, shopping areas, schools, parks, and employment centers, a successful pedestrian plan can be implemented.

These Pedestrian Oriented Development Districts are defined using quarter mile and half-mile radius circles that currently have or potentially will have the ingredients necessary for frequent walking trips. A quarter mile is the distance that is most likely to be considered walkable by the greatest number of pedestrians. It is preferred that the majority of the most frequented trip generators be located within the quarter mile district. A half mile is considered to be the upper limit for most simple walking trips, and this portion of the Pedestrian Oriented Development District is usually best suited for lower density residential areas or less frequented trip generators. This plan identifies the center of each district and defines the borders of both the quarter mile and half mile radii. Shared-use paths and other pedestrian infrastructure connect these districts to each other.



The designated Pedestrian Oriented Development Districts are intended primarily to identify areas in which pedestrian-friendly development should be encouraged. Although many proposed pedestrian infrastructure projects are located within one or more of these districts, it is important to note that sidewalks, paths, other infrastructure projects, and policies can and should be implemented outside of these districts as well.

Projects

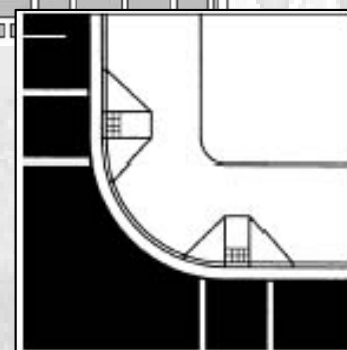
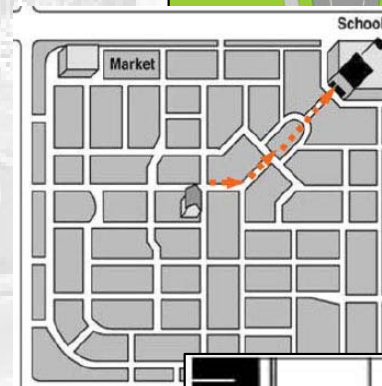
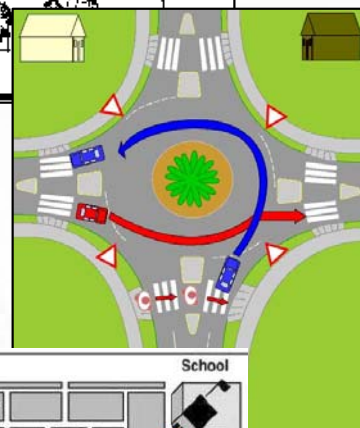
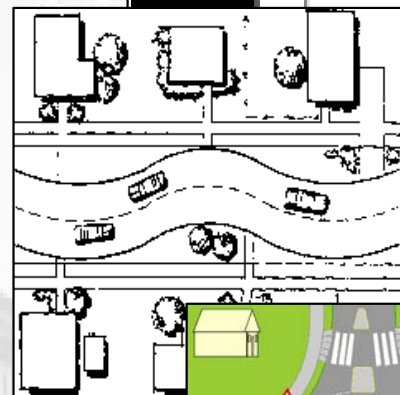
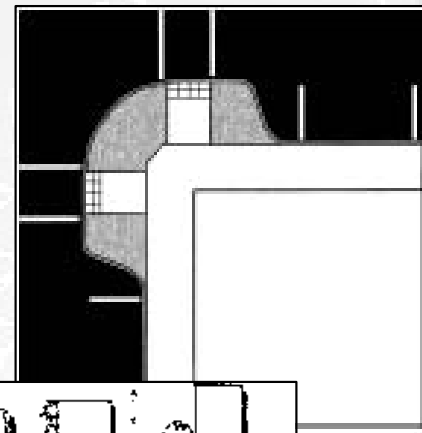
Sidewalks



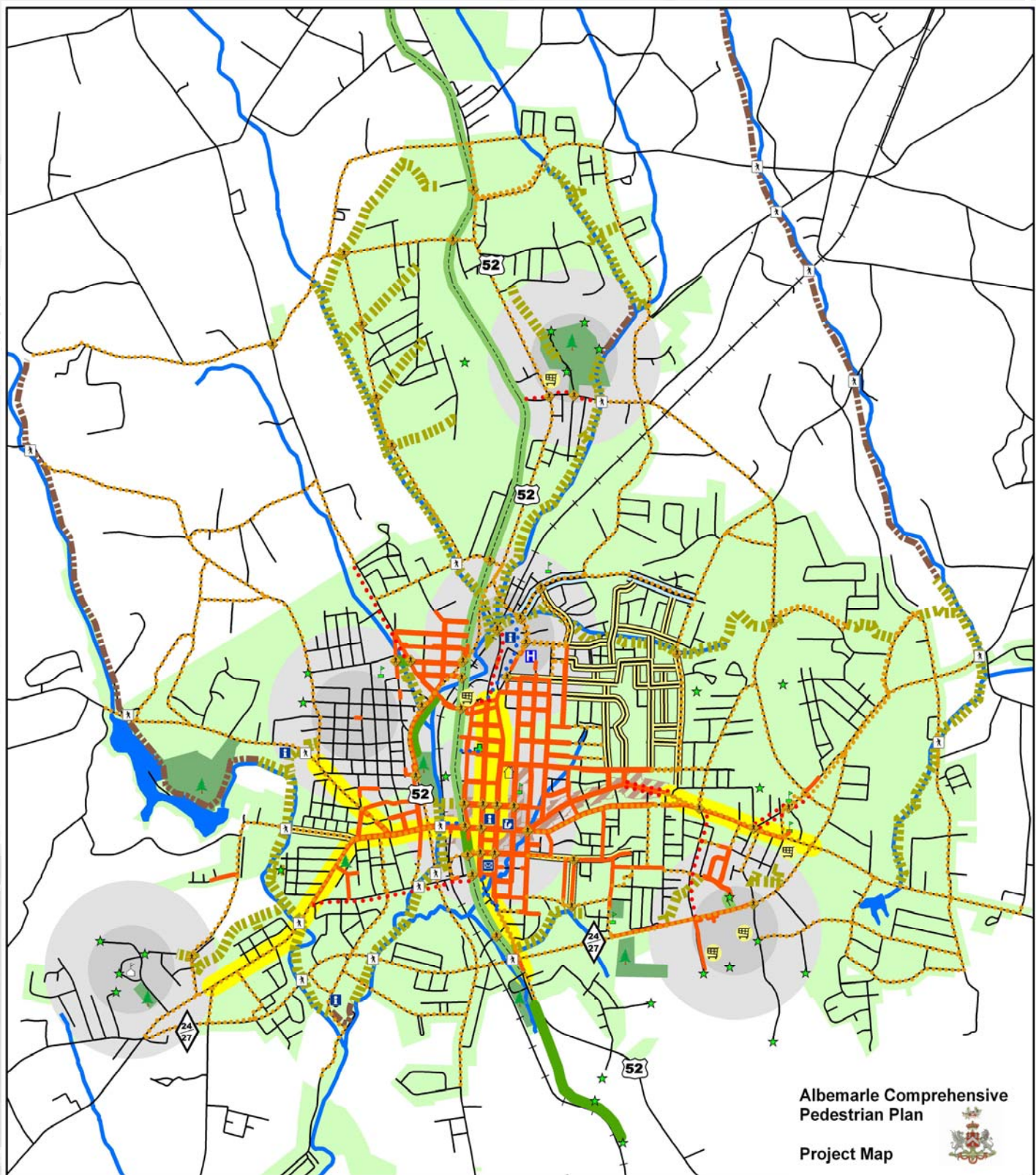
Shared-Use Paths



Crosswalks



Traffic Calming
and Accessibility



- Public Service Building
- Grocery
- Senior Center
- Library
- Community College
- Post Office
- Park
- Schools
- YMCA
- Hospitals

- Roads
- Railroads
- Existing Sidewalks
- Existing Shared-Use Paths
- Streams
- lakes
- Parks
- Historic Districts
- Albemarle City Limits

Proposed Road Right-of-Way Features

- Retrofit 5' Sidewalks
- Sidewalks by Policy
- 6-15' Sidewalks
- Striped Shoulders
- Bike Lane
- Crosswalk
- Underpass
- Useful Connections
- Proposed Streetscape Corridor

Proposed Shared-Use Paths

- Along Sewer
- Along Abandoned RR
- River Walkway

Proposed Pedestrian Districts

- Quarter Mile Radius
- Half Mile Radius

0 0.5 1
Miles



Ancillary Programs

In addition to infrastructure projects and policy modifications, a variety of ancillary programs are recommended to enhance the overall pedestrian environment and help establish a walking “culture” in Albemarle. Examples of beneficial programs are highlighted below; these and other programs are discussed in detail in the full report.

Spot Improvement & Maintenance Programs

Just as potholes, uneven pavement, unsafe intersections, and visual obstructions irritate automobile drivers, they do the same to pedestrians. Funding should be set aside for maintenance of worn sidewalks and consideration should be made as to which material to use to maximize the life of the sidewalk. A sidewalk inventory needs to be completed immediately, and maintenance improvements, connectivity, and ADA compliant upgrades should be prioritized.



Education Programs

School Safety Patrol Programs, safety signs, positive public marketing, and other programs have been responsible for an increased awareness and an increase in safety for pedestrians across the nation. In addition, driver and pedestrian education efforts will make the streets safer so that citizens feel safe walking along the roadways.



Encouragement and Promotional Programs

City programs that distribute and award pedometers, patches, and certificates of achievement could encourage the public to walk. Community gatherings or athletic activities on greenways, parkland, or closed roadways can spark awareness and create a desire for Albemarle’s citizens to interact and travel by foot. Programs that give security and comfort to the elderly and other adult pedestrians also help to increase the walking population, while organized days where citizens walk to work or school create a sense of security. One valuable program, Safe Routes to School, can be initiated to help create a better walking environment for school children.



Enforcement Programs

Enforcing existing laws, reducing the speed limits, and increasing the police presence throughout the community can help to enforce laws that protect walkers in Albemarle.

Pedestrians Hit by 30 MPH Car



Other Programs

Providing alternate forms of transportation such as transit or bicycle accommodations can increase the practicality of lifestyle choices to increase walking. Keeping the streets and walkways clear of litter can make the walking environment more appealing, and wayfinding signs can create routes that are more practical and accessible.



Policies and Ordinances

The City of Albemarle is currently updating its Land Use Plan. This pedestrian plan is intended to recommend policies that should be considered by the City as part of its comprehensive update of ordinances. The recommendations provided are intended to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment in the City. Key recommendations are summarized below; additional suggestions and information are contained in the full report.

Policy Recommendations

Use of Pedestrian Oriented Development Districts as a Planning Tool

As a planning tool, the Pedestrian Oriented Development District should be used to guide the locating of mixed-use pedestrian-oriented developments (such as shopping, high-density residential, and public services). Future growth of this type should be strongly encouraged within Pedestrian Oriented Development Districts and strongly discouraged outside of these districts; likewise, development types that are not pedestrian-friendly by nature (such as most industrial sites, distribution centers, and some low-density residential uses) should not be encouraged within these areas.

Local Ordinance Recommendations

Requirements for Infrastructure Associated with New Developments

Requirements for new pedestrian infrastructure should be consistent throughout the City's planning jurisdiction, not just in the designated Pedestrian Oriented Development Districts. Selected suggested guidelines are as follows (these requirements should apply to all new developments; not just those that are new subdivisions):

- New residential development must have a grid-like or interconnected curvilinear street pattern. These block separations may be vehicular roads or 10 -12 foot wide non-motorized traffic connections.
- New commercial development must be oriented to the pedestrian and include pedestrian walkways.
- Most cul-de-sacs will not be permitted unless geographic or other natural barriers exist that make connections unrealistic. A developer may create a short cul-de-sac or a "close" if an acceptable bicycle and pedestrian connection is created.
- Any new development or road construction where there is a pedestrian project mapped from the Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan must include that project to a functioning level according to guidelines. In many cases, exact alignment of the projects is not definite.
- New developments must connect to neighboring developments. Commercial areas must create a vehicular and/or pedestrian connection to adjacent residential communities and provide a future connection option for future developments. New residential communities must connect to existing residential and commercial developments, as well as provide connection possibilities to future adjacent developments. Exemptions may apply if there is a substantial natural or geographical barrier, or if there is an environmental concern with such a connection.
- All new commercial, residential, and mixed-use developments should provide sidewalks on both sides of the street, provide buffering from auto traffic and off-street parking lots, and provide trees that will shade sidewalks. All road construction projects should include acceptable pedestrian facilities that complete the transportation system. Accommodating motor vehicle traffic only is not acceptable.

Acquisition of Easements for Pedestrian Projects

As the City seeks to create sidewalk connections in areas that are already developed, the availability of right-of-way inevitably will be an obstacle. The City should take steps to formalize a policy regarding the construction of sidewalks or other pedestrian projects outside of the public right-of-way. Ideally, the City should identify opportunities to reach agreements with property owners to provide a sidewalk or shared-use path easement as necessary for new projects without acquiring property, or to use existing utility easements.

Implementation Plan

Infrastructure Project Summary

To help narrow the immediate focus for the City in the implementation of pedestrian projects, a subset of “high priority projects” was defined based on the scores received by each project as part of a prioritization process. The fifteen projects receiving a score of at least 70 out of 100 points were designated as high priority projects. Focusing initially on this more limited list of infrastructure projects will enable the City to implement the projects that will have the most benefit to pedestrians in the area, while building support for additional development of the pedestrian network. The other projects identified in the plan could still be implemented with or before these high priority projects if the resources become available and the need or opportunity is apparent.

Rank	Description of Improvement	Roadway / Location
1	Countdown signal & crosswalks	At all intersections within 1/4 mile from City Hall
2	6-15' sidewalk	1st St. from Old Charlotte Rd. to East Park Avenue
3	5' sidewalk	Leonard Ave. from Main St. to Hwy. 24/27 Bypass
4	10' paved upland shared-use path with appropriate lighting and crossing considerations	Social trail from Inger Street terminus to Highway 24/27 Bypass
5	Countdown signal & crosswalks	24/27 and Henson Street
6	Striped shoulders for traffic calming	Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. from 4th St. to Colston St.
7	10' paved lowland shared-use path with pedestrian-scaled lighting	On sewer line social trail from Inger St. to Arey Ave.
8	10' paved upland shared-use path including appropriate road crossings	Abandoned rail line from current rail trail to Snuggs Street
9	Streetscape/sidewalks/landscaping/crosswalks	Main Street & Pee Dee Ave. from Ridge St. to 24/27
10	5' sidewalk including appropriate road crossings	Both sides of Badin Road to middle school and continue on one side to the NE Connector
11	Striped shoulders for traffic calming including appropriate neighborhood crosswalks	Throughout neighborhoods in between 2nd Street, Ridge St., Park Ridge Rd., and Montgomery Ave.
12	5' sidewalk including appropriate crosswalks	Salisbury Ave. from Watts St. to McKee St.
13	10' paved lowland shared-use path including appropriate road crossings	On Sewer Line (Coley Branch) from the existing path to Montgomery Park Greenway
14	Streetscape/sidewalks/landscaping/crosswalks	1st and 2nd Streets from Salisbury Ave. to US 52
15	5' sidewalk	Old Charlotte Road from 1st St. to Main St.

Funding Sources

A combination of funding sources will be needed to construct the infrastructure projects proposed in this plan. The City of Albemarle should seek all viable funding opportunities for project implementation, including Federal and State monies where available. Special funding programs for specific types of projects (e.g. Safe Routes to School) should also be pursued. Private foundations should be thoroughly researched to identify possible funding options.

Although many funding sources potentially can provide revenues for project implementation, it is likely that local government funding will be a primary component (for matching federal / state funds and for implementation where other revenue streams are not available). Therefore, it is recommended that the City establish a set aside amount in the annual Public Works budget for pedestrian infrastructure project implementation. An annual set aside would ensure that progress is made every year on constructing the specified projects, and would illustrate a commitment from the City to improve walkability.